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Research Article

The intergenerational transmission of migration capital: The role of family migration history and lived migration experiences

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Abstract

BACKGROUND
Growing empirical evidence shows that the decision to migrate is influenced by parents' international migration experiences, with the second generation being more likely to migrate than individuals with no migration background. However, the factors underpinning this intergenerational transmission of migration behaviour remain poorly understood.

OBJECTIVES
This study extends existing evidence in two main ways. First, it assesses the relative contribution of two transmission pathways: family migration history and lived childhood migration experiences. Second, it considers both the probability of migrating as an adult and the direction of migration (onward versus return migration).

METHODS
We apply survival analysis to retrospective survey data for baby boomers who were born in or migrated to any of 15 European countries during childhood and track their first international migration in adulthood.

RESULTS
Family migration history facilitates adult life migration, particularly when both parents migrated. Living in a foreign country as a child is more conducive to adult life migration than family migration history alone. For individuals born in the survey country, childhood migration experiences enable the acquisition of both general and location-specific migration capital, whereas for members of the 1.5 generation, these experiences mainly lead to location-specific migration capital.

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CONTRIBUTION

Building on these initial findings, we refine the concept of migration capital as a set of general and location-specific attitudes, skills, and resources that accumulate within and across generations through family migration history and lived migration experiences, and that facilitate future migration by altering individuals' perceptions of migration's monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits. Further empirical testing is required to generalise this concept.

1. Introduction

Migrating is the result of a complex process of maximising opportunities, meeting personal aspirations, or simply surviving hardship. Thus the decision to migrate is shaped by multiple macro-level economic and political factors, meso-level factors such as networks and institutions, and individual-level factors, including age and education. Despite the demonstrated influence of these factors on migration behaviour, low population levels of migration aspirations remain a scholarly puzzle (Debray, Ruyssen, and Schewel 2023). As a result, attention has turned to determinants of migration other than traditional sociodemographic attributes, and a literature on parent-to-child transmission of migration behaviour is rapidly emerging.

Often focused on second-generation migrants, this new line of inquiry has revealed that descendants of immigrants have greater migration intentions (Ivlevs and King 2015) and are more likely to realise these intentions (de Jong and de Valk 2023) than the native born. This finding echoes longer-term accounts of the role of family norms and expectations in the decision to migrate internally (De Jong 2000; Myers 1999). Of particular interest is the fact that both ethnic minority (de Jong 2022) and ethnic majority (Wessendorf 2007) groups are more likely to migrate than native-born individuals. This suggests that the heightened migration rates of second-generation migrants are not driven solely by a lack of integration or limited economic opportunities in destination countries but are rather the result of a unique set of skills, resources, and transnational ties that foster international migration in later life.

Findings within this literature have typically been interpreted through the theoretical lens of migration capital. Although definitions of migration capital remain loose and varied, they generally allude to the central role of family – including family migration history, migration norms, and transnational networks – in facilitating subsequent international migration (Ivlevs and King 2012). Some definitions place an emphasis on individuals' lived experiences of migration, particularly someone's first international migration (Moret 2020). Such experiences are argued to help develop skills, networks,

and resources that can be mobilised for future migration or for the decision to remain immobile by choice (Kõu and Bailey 2014).

In this paper, we draw on a range of multidisciplinary theories – including social learning theory, prospect theory, and experiential learning theory – to refine the concept of migration capital in three main ways. First, we argue that there are two interlinked processes through which children may accumulate migration capital: (a) *indirectly* through family migration history and (b) *directly* through their own lived experiences. We further propose that these two processes compound to cumulatively enhance migration capital. Second, we explicitly distinguish between two components: (a) *location-specific* migration capital, which enables migration to countries where prospective migrants have established ties, and (b) *general* migration capital, which facilitates migration to new destination countries. Third, we propose that the mobilisation of migration capital is contingent on one's economic resources. Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups may face resource constraints that preclude them from drawing on their migration capital. Building on these refinements, we propose a unified definition of migration capital: a set of general and location-specific attitudes, skills, and resources that accumulate within and across generations through family migration history and lived migration experiences, and that facilitate future migration by altering individuals' perceptions of its monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits.

We provide an initial empirical validation of this definition by comparing the adult migration behaviour of baby boomers who were born in one of 15 European countries or who migrated to any of those countries during childhood. We consider five population subgroups: (1) individuals born in the survey country to parents born in the survey country (G3+); (2) individuals born to parents born in the survey country who migrated internationally as children and came back to the survey country (G2.75); (3) individuals who were born outside the survey country to parents born outside the survey country and who migrated to the survey country in childhood (G1.5); (4) individuals who were born in the survey country to parents born outside the survey country (G2); and (5) individuals born in the survey country to one parent born outside the survey country and another parent born in the survey country (G2.5). Doing so enables us to disentangle the contributions to subsequent adult migration behaviour of family migration history and personal experiences of migration during childhood. Empirically, the examination of childhood migration experiences and the distinction between return and onward migration in adulthood are important innovations of this study. These are made possible by leveraging complete migration histories since birth retrospectively collected as part of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) and analysing these data through survival analysis.

2. Theoretical framework

The intergenerational transmission of demographic behaviour is a well-established phenomenon, with a large body of work focusing on the parent-to-child transmission of marriage, fertility, and divorce behaviours. However, evidence for migration is more limited. We argue that a similar process of intergenerational continuity is likely to manifest for migration behaviour, with adult children emulating their parents. Specifically, we argue that socialisation into a higher propensity to migrate is the result of two intertwined factors that facilitate adult migration: family migration history and children's own lived migration experience. In this section, we conceptualise each component in turn and outline the mechanisms through which intergenerational transmission of migration behaviour occurs. We then explain how both processes contribute to the creation of migration capital, including general and location-specific resources, skills, and attitudes that facilitate future migration. Finally, we draw on this framework to propose research hypotheses.

2.1 Family migration history

Empirical studies have begun to observe parent–child similarities in migration behaviour. For example, individuals born to immigrant parents from Western Europe are more likely to migrate from the Netherlands than are individuals with no such migration background (de Jong and de Valk 2023). Similarly, individuals born to immigrant parents from majority ethnic groups in Kosovo and Latvia hold greater migration intentions than individuals born to native-born parents (Ivlevs and King 2015). While these findings align with the notion that adult children emulate their parents' migratory behaviours, the mechanisms implicated have not been fully theorised. We argue that intergenerational correlations in migration behaviour are the result of a two-step process: (1) parental acquisition of migration capital through migration and (2) parental transmission of such capital onto children.

First, through their own migration experiences, parents form views and attitudes toward migration and gain knowledge on how to migrate. For parents, migration can be a transformative experience. Migrants acquire hands-on knowledge on how to migrate with respect to, for example, visa requirements, potential destinations, or the costs and resources required to migrate (Paul 2015). Through this process, they may also develop social networks in both origin and destination countries (Manchin and Orazbayev 2018). The experience of migrating both reflects and influences parents' views on subsequent migration: its desirability, its feasibility, its implications, and even whether they would endorse or recommend migration. In short, people who migrate internationally retain

knowledge on how to migrate and may have more optimistic views about migration as a life course option, particularly if it led to an improvement in their personal circumstances (Ivlevs and King 2012). Naturally, for some individuals, migration does not lead to significant improvements (Mahler 1995; Schkade and Kahneman 1998). Therefore some mobile parents may hold negative views about migration. Yet, on average, migration is beneficial to migrants' income and subjective well-being (Nikolova and Graham 2015) and to their children's educational attainment (Zuccotti, Ganzeboom, and Guveli 2017). Thus we expect the experience of migration to lead, on average, to more positive views on migration.

Second, parents transmit these resources, skills, and attitudes to their children through a process of socialisation. This process is best understood through the lens of social learning theory, which posits that the formation of social and cultural attitudes, knowledge, and ensuing behavioural practices takes place during childhood and adolescence (Bandura and Walters 1977). Among the different social agents contributing to children's social learning, parents occupy a privileged position due to their close contact with – and capacity for influence over – their offspring. Parents play a critical role in their children's socialisation through both role modelling and direct teaching (Perales et al. 2023). Children have ongoing opportunities to learn from their parents through repeated interactions and by observing parental behaviours that align with parental beliefs. As a result, children progressively internalise parental beliefs, attitudes, and values as normative behaviour. In the context of migration, this model suggests that parents transmit their attitudes, skills, and knowledge of migration to their children in a way that shapes their children's migratory behaviour as adults.

Because of their own migration experiences, parents can transmit attitudes toward migration that reduce the psychological barriers to migrating. For example, whether immediate family members consider migration to be acceptable behaviour has been shown to be a strong predictor of internal migration behaviour (De Jong 2000). It is likely that these family views also influence international migration. Similarly, positive parental attitudes towards migration, reflected or acquired through parents' migration history, may also expand their children's "horizon of opportunities" regarding their own migration. They may do so by characterising migration as a viable and desirable option. This is visible, for instance, in Mexican primary school children; those with family members involved in migration to the United States are more likely to aspire to migrate than those without such family influences (Kandel and Massey 2002). This process is so powerful that it has been demonstrated even among parents who were forcibly displaced (Brunarska and Ivlevs 2023). Alternatively, parents without past migration experiences may discourage their children from migrating – a process that may be more pronounced in countries where intergenerational care is the social norm (Bordone 2012). Some parents who were immobile against their desires may hold positive attitudes toward

migration that they may pass on to their children (Carling and Schewel 2018; Schewel 2020). However, we anticipate mobile parents to hold, on average, more positive attitudes than immobile parents. Indeed, the simple knowledge that one migrated in the past makes future migration less frightening (Aslany et al. 2021). In addition, parents who migrated may also transmit their acquired knowledge about potential destinations and guidance on how to initiate and conduct an international move or how to live in a foreign country, including practical skills and networks needed to handle the logistical and administrative hurdles of changing country of residence (Cairns 2021). Besides, children with foreign-born parents are often exposed to influences from their parents' native culture. This process of transnational socialisation facilitates the acquisition of location-specific skills, such as fluency in a foreign language and social ties with friends and relatives in a parent's country of origin, which are reinforced through international visits (Groenewold and De Valk 2017).

Altogether, the literature drawn upon within this section suggests that family migration history should contribute to parental accumulation of both location-specific and general migration-facilitating attitudes, skills, and resources that parents can then transmit to their children. Critically, these attitudes, skills, and resources are acquired from one's parents throughout childhood and can be drawn upon later in life for use in migration, particularly to a parent's country of origin.

2.2 Childhood migration experiences

For some individuals, the processes of intergenerational transmission outlined in the previous section are reinforced by their own lived experiences of migration during childhood. While there is growing interest in the international migration of children (Böhlmark 2009), research examining the impact of childhood migration on later-life migration choices is limited. However, we know from the internal migration literature that individuals who migrated in childhood are more likely to migrate both internally (Bernard 2022; Bernard and Vidal 2020; Myers 1999) and internationally (Bernard and Perales 2021) in adulthood. This is because migrants "learn by doing" (Bailey 1993). As Morrison wrote about internal migration, "Decision thresholds are initially high for persons who have never moved in their adult life. Once a move has been made, though, the experience may foster a learning process that blunts subsequent inertia" (Morrison 1971:179). This learning process is even more relevant to international migration, as it represents a riskier, more costly, and more regulated endeavour than internal migration and one that requires additional investments, skills, and resources (King and Skeldon 2010).

This learning process is not restricted to childhood; migration-facilitating skills, attitudes, and resources are acquired continuously throughout one's migration career, including during adulthood (Bernard and Perales 2021). However, migrating during childhood is unique and is different than adult migration in several ways. First, as tied migrants, children have little say in their migration experiences; in most cases, they simply follow their parents. In other words, children do not enact a preference they already hold when they migrate but are rather exogenously exposed to migration. Second, migration that occurs early in life is likely to leave a significant and long-lasting imprint on children by exposing them to a new and life-changing event. In the internal migration literature, this manifests empirically in the observed impact of pre-school-age migration on the odds of adult migration (Bernard and Vidal 2020). Third, because it occurs in the family context, childhood migration facilitates the intergenerational passing of preferences, attitudes, and norms concerning ideal migratory behaviours (Myers 1999). In other words, lived migration experiences occurring during childhood reinforce socialisation into migration behaviour.

Through the process of leaving and entering new social contexts, child migrants may develop social skills that they can mobilise for future migration. For example, these experiences may reduce the stress and psychological costs of moving – caused by the severance of social ties, among other things – which are important deterrents of mobility (Oishi et al. 2012). Indeed, evidence from social psychology suggests that repeat internal migrants are more socially skilled and more adaptive to new environments than both immobile individuals and one-off internal migrants (Oishi 2010). The simple knowledge that one migrated in the past makes future migration less frightening (Aslany et al. 2021), supporting the idea of learning by doing through the development of migration-facilitating skills. Further, this process may be compounded by the acquisition of location-specific skills from social agents other than parents. This includes linguistic skills acquired while being abroad (Carlson, Gerhards, and Hans 2017) and direct ties to friends and relatives living abroad (Frändberg 2014), both of which can be drawn upon later in life to facilitate mobility. Finally, experiences of childhood migration can also shape one's attitudes towards migration. Children who have reaped the benefits of migration – either directly, through better living conditions or educational opportunities, or indirectly, thanks to better employment opportunities for their parents – are more likely to view migration as a fulfilling and enriching endeavour than are other individuals (Ivlevs and King 2012). This process benefits both children who migrated permanently with their parents – the so-called 1.5 generation – as well as those who migrated temporarily during childhood and returned to their country of birth (Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, and White 2016).

Altogether, the literature reviewed over the last two sections suggests two intertwined processes through which individuals accumulate migration capital during

childhood: (a) indirectly through their family migration history and (b) directly through their owned lived migration experience. While it is possible to accumulate (a) without (b), it is not possible to accumulate (b) without (a). Thus (a) and (b) should not be seen as competing processes but rather as cumulative processes. It follows that having both a family migration history and migration experiences during childhood may exert a particularly strong impact on adult migration. Indeed, experiential learning theory posits that "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 1984: 41). It also emphasises the role of concrete experiences as the basis for reflections that support abstract conceptualisation from which new implications for action can be drawn. While we recognise that there are different learning styles, lived migration experiences may provide children with the opportunity to engage with the four components of the experiential learning cycle: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualisation, and (4) testing implications of concepts in new situations. In contrast, family migration history mainly supports abstract conceptualisation. Therefore individuals who experience migration as children may be more likely to migrate in adulthood than those only exposed to family migration history. In the next section, we integrate the literature discussed so far into a unified definition of migration capital.

2.3 Migration capital: Towards a unified definition

The idea that individuals progressively develop and acquire skills, knowledge, and resources that facilitate subsequent migration has been previously encapsulated in the amorphous term "migration capital." There are various iterations of this concept, which differ in their theoretical underpinnings, terminology, and empirical operationalisation. These include notions such as "migration-facilitating capital" (Kim 2018), "mobility capital" (Moret 2020), "migration-specific capital" (de Jong and de Valk 2023), and "family migration capital" (Ivlevs and King 2012). Some iterations of the concept emphasise the intergenerational transmission of attitudes toward migration that reduce psychological barriers to migration (Ivlevs and King 2012:119). Others focus on individuals' personal lived migration experiences, particularly the first international migration in adulthood (Cairns 2021). They often separate personal migration capital, or lived experiences, from family migration capital (De Jong 2000), with empirical applications typically focusing on one or the other process. This disjuncture is problematic, as it overlooks the links and interactions between the two processes discussed in the previous sections. A strand of work has linked migration capital to other, broader forms of capital. For example, Murphy-Lejeune (2002: 51) defines mobility capital as a "sub-component of human capital, enabling individuals to enhance their skills because of the richness of the international experience gained by living abroad." In

contrast, Bourdieusian approaches underscore the role of state actors in the production, conversion, and legitimisation of migration capital (Kim 2018). The role of state actors is also central to Moret's (2020) mobility capital. This is defined as the accumulation of cross-border mobility experiences that can be leveraged to decide when and how to move or to remain put. It is deemed to be conditioned by migration policies that shape migration decisions.

We argue that these various definitions focus on selected aspects of migration capital, offering fragmented perspectives on the concept. Further, they largely overlook the distinct role of childhood migration experiences. Drawing on the previous sections, we refine and enhance the concept of migration capital by proposing a unified and more comprehensive definition. Our approach is grounded in neoclassical approaches to human migration behaviour, which emphasise the monetary and non-monetary costs of and returns on migration (Sjaastad 1962). From this perspective, prospective migrants weigh the expected costs of and returns on migration to maximise net returns (Todaro 1969). Prospect theory further explains the role of non-pecuniary factors in the migration decision-making process, positing that individuals are risk averse and place greater emphasis on potential losses than potential gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Thus risk aversion leads people to value what they already have beyond its economic value (the so-called endowment effect), which underscores the psychological costs of migration (Morrison and Clark 2016).

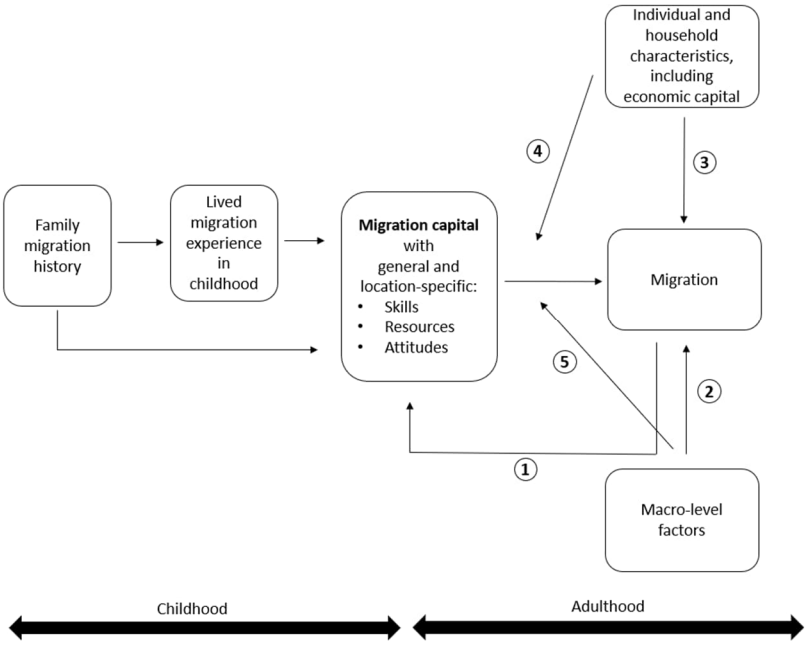
The preceding section has shown how migration capital enables prospective migrants to face lower monetary and non-monetary costs of migration by drawing on location-specific skills and resources (such as transnational social networks and linguistic skills) or, more generally, by developing social and practical skills that facilitate future migration. At the same time, we have offered evidence that migration capital helps maximise the economic benefits of migration. For example, students with an international migration experience are more successful in securing employment upon graduation, including international jobs (Wiers-Jenssen 2008), than students who did not study in a foreign country (Findlay et al. 2006). Thus migration experience can be used as a strategy to strengthen one's socioeconomic position (Murphy-Lejeune 2002). It follows that individuals who have experienced migration are more likely to view migration as a fulfilling and enriching endeavour than are individuals without such experience (Ivlevs and King 2012) and thus are likely to perceive greater potential benefits to migration. We therefore propose that the skills, attitudes, and resources acquired in childhood contribute to the accumulation of migration capital that can be mobilised in later life in the decision to migrate or to stay immobile by choice.

On the basis of these propositions, we define migration capital as a set of general and location-specific attitudes, skills, and resources that accumulate within and across generations through family migration history and lived migration experiences, and that

facilitate future migration by altering individuals' perceptions of its monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits.

Figure 1 depicts the processes underlying this definition. It outlines how some individuals acquire migration capital during childhood only through family migration history, whereas others also accrue it through lived migration experiences. The feedback loop between migration and migration capital (arrow 1) stresses that this is a dynamic process that develops over the life course. That is, migration-facilitating skills, attitudes, and resources are acquired continuously throughout one's migration career, including during adulthood (Bernard and Perales 2021). The framework also recognises the influence on migration of other individual and household factors, such as age, income, and marital status (arrows 3), and of macro-level factors (arrow 2), including economic conditions (Windzio, Teney, and Lenkewitz 2021; Zaiceva and Zimmermann 2016). More importantly, the mobilisation of one's migration capital is contingent on one's economic resources, because moving is a costly endeavour (arrow 4), and on structural macro-level conditions (arrow 5) such as labour market policies, immigrant integration policies, and citizenship law, which may influence whether one can leverage their migration capital to migrate.

Figure 1: The formation of migration capital over the life course



2.4 Contributions and research hypotheses

The definition of migration capital introduced in the previous section refines the concept in three main ways, each of which leads to a series of testable hypotheses that can be used to assess the usefulness of these additional components.

First, we have argued that there are two interlinked processes through which children may accumulate migration capital: (a) indirectly through family migration history and (b) directly through their own lived experiences. Based on these tenets, we expect that *individuals with a family migration history are more likely to migrate than individuals without one* (Hypothesis 1a). Empirically, this should manifest in individuals with two parents born outside the survey country (G2) being more likely to migrate in adulthood than individuals born in the survey country to parents born in the survey country (G3+). Further, we expect that *the impact of family migration history increases with the number of parents born outside the survey country* (Hypothesis 1b). If this is true, then members of G2 should exhibit a greater likelihood to migrate during adulthood than individuals with only one parent born outside the survey country (G2.5).

Based on the discussions in earlier sections, we also anticipate that *family migration history and lived experience are mutually beneficial and synergise to cumulatively enhance migration capital* (Hypothesis 2). Empirically, this should manifest in members of the 1.5 generation (G1.5), who combine both family migration history and lived migration experience, exhibiting a greater propensity to migrate than members of G2, who have no firsthand childhood migration experiences.

Our second contribution is to explicitly distinguish between two components of migration capital: (a) location-specific migration capital, which enables migration to selected destinations, and (b) general migration capital, which facilitates migration to a broader range of destinations. Depending on the relative strength of each process, we expect different migration outcomes such that *individuals who possess location-specific capital are more likely to engage in return migration, whereas individuals who possess general migration capital are more likely to migrate onward to a country where they or their family have not previously resided* (Hypothesis 3). While we cannot directly measure general and location-specific migration capital, we can gauge which is more influential by examining the destination choices of G1.5, G2, and G2.5 (the latter representing individuals born in the survey country to one parent born outside the survey country and one parent born in the survey country, as previously noted). If the majority return to a parent's country of origin, this would signal that parents tend to transmit location-specific migration capital. On the other hand, if most migrate onward to a third country, we can conclude that family migration history largely contributes to the generation of general migration capital. Similarly, individuals returning to a country in which they resided during childhood would indicate a preponderance of location-specific capital, whereas onward migration would indicate that general migration capital prevails.

The latter idea can be tested by comparing the migration behaviour of individuals born in the survey country whose parents were born in the survey country (G3+) to the behaviour of (1) individuals born in the survey country whose parents were born in the survey country but who migrated in childhood and came back to the survey country (G2.75) and (2) members of G1.5.

Our third contribution is to build on Bourdieusian formulations of migration capital (Kim 2018) to unveil connections between migration capital and broader forms of capital that can contribute to migration, particularly economic capital. Kim (2018) criticised earlier formulations of migration capital for positioning it as "a sub-component of human capital" (Murphy-Lejeune 2002), an approach that allegedly downplayed interactions with other forms of capital. Central to the Bourdieusian perspective is the idea of "conversion" between different forms of capital – for example, between economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Of particular relevance here is economic capital, which constitutes a critical pathway for individuals to fund an international relocation. Thus a minimum level of economic capital is required for one's migration capital to facilitate an international move. This is represented by arrow 4 on Figure 1, and it means that socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals may not be able to draw on their migration capital to migrate. Indeed, prospective migrants who lack economic resources tend to first migrate to less desirable destinations (Paul 2015) or migrate internally (Skeldon 2006) to accumulate the resources required to fund more costly international moves. This interplay between economic and migration capital leads to our final research hypothesis. Specifically, we expect that *socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals are less able to draw on their migration capital to migrate, particularly for migration to third countries for which migration costs are greater* (Hypothesis 4).

3. Data and methods

3.1 The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)

In most longitudinal surveys and administrative datasets used in migration research, sampling frames are based on national borders. Therefore international migrants are lost to attrition because participants are no longer part of the study cohort after they cross international borders. This issue of "national methodologism" has largely precluded longitudinal analyses of international migration; for notable exceptions, see Durand and Massey (2004) and Beauchemin (2018). To overcome this issue and test our research hypotheses, we draw on data from SHARE, a compendium of nationally representative surveys of the adult population aged 50 and older in 27 European countries (Börsch-

Supan 2020a, 2020b). In 2007–2008 (wave 3), SHARE retrospectively collected information on the complete life histories – including residential histories – of respondents from 11 countries. In 2017 (wave 7), this retrospective data collection process was repeated for new survey participants – that is, for individuals from the 14 countries that joined SHARE after 2008 and individuals from refreshment samples. Thus SHARE has collected information on each participant's life history at least once. To maximise sample size, we use both survey waves containing this retrospective information (waves 3 and 7). We make two sets of exclusions on this sample. First, we exclude respondents from Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia). This is because of significant border changes within the region during the 20th century that hinder the measurement of international migration. Second, to safeguard our international migration measures against potential biases stemming from mass displacement due to World War II, we exclude from the analysis individuals born before 1946 (n = 14,632). In the life history modules, SHARE respondents were asked to report each place they had resided for longer than six months since birth, with a maximum of 30 places. For each place, the start and end dates, region, and country were recorded. We use this information to identify international migration events occurring during childhood and adulthood. Education, employment, partnership, and fertility histories were also collected using life history grids to facilitate recall (Brüderl et al. 2017).

In wave 5, SHARE began collecting information on the country of birth of respondents' parents, which is needed to identify migration generations. Thus our analyses further exclude individuals who died between survey waves 3 and 5 (n = 152). We also exclude first-generation immigrants who moved to the survey county as adults (n = 1,357), because their risk of migrating from the survey country cannot be observed from the age of 18. However, we include individuals who migrated to the survey country during childhood – that is, G1.5. Finally, we exclude respondents from Portugal because of the high number of missing values for parents' countries of birth. The final analytic sample comprises 19,475 respondents born between 1946 and 1967 in 15 countries (Austria, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, Denmark, Greece, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Finland, and Malta) with no missing information. Given the inclusion criteria described above, these are individuals who were born in the survey country or who migrated to the survey country before the age of 18.

3.2 Key measures

To ensure that migration histories are of comparable length for all respondents, we consider migration trajectories from birth to age 50, the age of the youngest SHARE

respondents surveyed in 2017. We construct separate variables capturing childhood migration (before age 18) and adult migration (between the ages of 18 and 50). In doing so, we assume that individuals aged 18 or older are independent migrants, but we recognise that some may still be moving with their parents. (SHARE does not allow us to distinguish between independent and tied migrants.) Given the survey dates, all childhood migration occurred before 1985 and all adult migration from 1964 to 2017. Since this study period is broad, we identify three distinct birth cohorts (1946–1952, 1953–1959, and 1960–1967) and control for cohort membership in multivariable models.

In our weighted sample, 2.9% of respondents experienced at least one international migration during childhood (unweighted $n = 565$) and 3.3% experienced at least one international migration during adulthood (unweighted $n = 853$). The modal age at first adult international migration, our outcome of interest, sits at 24 years and the median age at 25. We also develop international migration measures that take into account the destination country, distinguishing between return and onward international migration. Return migration is defined as a move to any country where the respondent previously lived as a child or to a country where at least one of their parents was born. Conversely, onward migration is a move to a country with which an individual has no such ties. In our sample, 44% of first adult international migrations are return moves and 56% are onward moves.

We combine individuals' international migration histories during childhood, their country of birth, and their parents' countries of birth to classify respondents into five discrete groups, as shown in Table 1. The first group includes individuals with no childhood migration born in the survey country to parents born in the survey country. We label this group G3+ because some respondents are third-generation migrants whose grandparents were born outside the survey country, whereas others have more distal or no migration ties (Klok et al. 2020). This is by far the largest group, comprising close to 92% of the sample. We distinguish them from individuals who experienced at least one international migration before 18 years of age. This group includes: (a) individuals born outside the survey country to parents born in the survey country who moved back to the survey country by age 18 and (b) individuals born in the survey country to parents born in the survey country who migrated in childhood and moved to the survey country before age 18. Because of small sample sizes, we combined these two groups and labelled them G2.75. They account for 1.3% of the sample. The third group encompasses second-generation migrants (G2) who were born in the survey country to parents born outside the survey country and who did not migrate in childhood. They account for 1.4% of the sample. We distinguish them from a fourth group comprising members of the 2.5 generation (G2.5), who have only one parent born outside the survey country and who presumably have a weaker family migration history. This group encompasses 4.4% of the sample. The fifth and final group includes 1.5 generation migrants (G1.5) who were

born outside the survey country to parents born outside the survey country and who migrated to the survey country during childhood. This group accounts for 1.3% of the sample. Members of G1.5 and G2.75 possess both a family migration history and their own lived migration experiences and are therefore expected to be more mobile in adulthood than the other groups.

Table 1: Respondents' migrant background

Group	Respondent's place of birth	Parents' place of birth	*n* (unweighted)	% (weighted)
G3+	Born in the survey country	Born in the survey country	17,770	91.95
G2.75	Born in the survey country, migrated, and came back during childhood; or born outside the survey country and migrated to the survey country before age 18	Born in the survey country	210	1.26
G1.5	Born outside the survey country and migrated to the survey country before age 18	Both parents born outside the survey country	291	1.33
G2	Born in the survey country	Both parents born outside the survey country	273	1.44
G2.5	Born in the survey country	One parent born outside the survey country	914	4.32

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

Table 2 breaks down the sample by the region of origin of respondents' parents. Most parents of foreign-born respondents come from Northern and Western Europe. Such partition reflects the sociohistorical circumstances of the birth cohorts surveyed in SHARE, who are often those in G2 and G2.5 whose parents migrated before World War II from neighbouring countries. We return to this historical context and its implications for our findings in the concluding section. Among respondents with two parents born outside the survey country, 91% had parents who came from the same country and less than 1% had parents from different regions. The small count of migrants born outside Northern and Western Europe means that we cannot test for differences by region of origin; nor can we explore differences between parents from the same country and parents from different origins.

Table 2: Parents' birthplace, unweighted count data

		Father's birthplace			
		Survey country	Northern and Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Outside Europe
Mother's birthplace	Survey country	17,214	218	124	35
	Northern and Western Europe	342	295	11	5
	Eastern Europe	108	8	95	2
	Outside Europe	32	3	0	95

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

3.3 Analytic approach

Our analytical focus is on the first international migration experienced between the ages of 18 and 50. We begin by describing the average migration trajectories of individuals with different family migration histories and childhood migration experiences through Kaplan–Meier survival functions. These give the survival rate – that is, the proportion of respondents who did not migrate out of the total pool of respondents "at risk" of migrating – at each year of age. If a person eventually migrates, the individual also leaves the pool of individuals at risk of migrating and no longer contributes to estimation.

We then estimate multivariable models to adjust for a range of potential confounders. To estimate the duration-specific risk of first adult migration, we use a Cox proportional hazard model where $h_i(t)$ denotes the risk of first migration for individual i at time t, where time t is measured in years from 0 (for age 18) to 32 (for age 50). The model that we fit can be formally expressed as follows:

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \times \exp(\beta_1 M + \beta_2 SD + \beta_3 C + \beta_4 W) \quad (1)$$

The model includes a range of time-constant variables. (For descriptive statistics, see Appendix A.) The focal variables of interest are family migration histories and childhood migration experiences, captured in vector M. Other control sociodemographic variables are captured in vector SD and include gender, birth cohort, urbanicity of place of residence (at age 17), and parental educational background (highest level of education attained by either parent). Because many respondents migrated in early adulthood, before completion of tertiary education, we use parental education as a proxy for socioeconomic status.[3] All models include a country fixed effect, C, and a wave fixed effect, W, to control for structural macro-level conditions that may shape migration decisions. We opted to model country-level heterogeneity through country fixed effects because a multilevel framework is not appropriate for the small number of countries represented in the sample (Bryan and Jenkins 2013; Möhring 2012).

These sets of controls are introduced in a stepwise fashion. First, we control only for migration histories (Model A) and then progressively add country and wave fixed effects (Model B) and sociodemographic characteristics (Model C). The βs in Equation (1) are

[3] We recognise that parental education does not fully capture socioeconomic disadvantage. Some authors (Angelini et al. 2019; Bernard 2023; Havari and Mazzonna 2015) have used principal component analysis to construct a composite measure of socioeconomic status based on retrospective SHARE information measured at age 10 (number of books, occupation of the main breadwinner, number of rooms, number of facilities [fixed bath, cold and hot running water supply, inside toilet, and central heating] in the house). However, these data items are missing for more than 10% of our sample. In addition, data on parental occupation has not been coded for a further 15% of the sample. In contrast, parental education is collected at each wave of SHARE and has few missing values. To maximise the sample size, we choose to use parental education as a proxy of socioeconomic status.

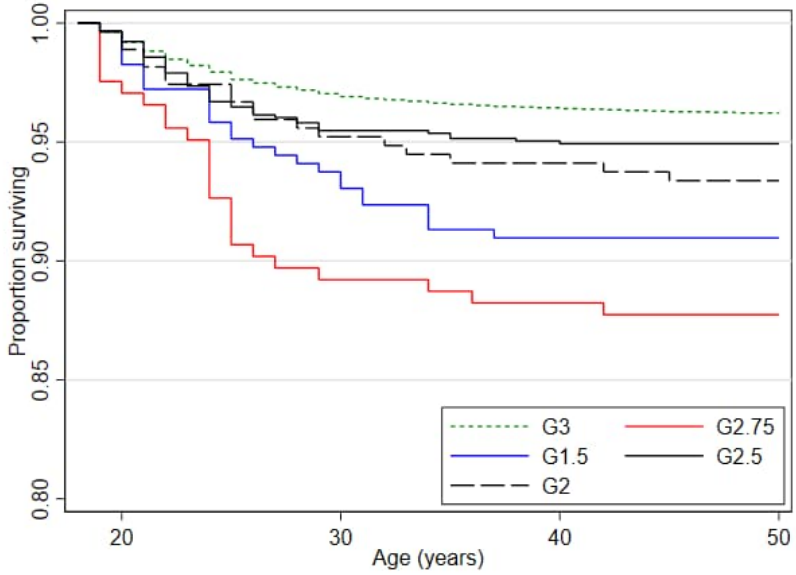
vectors of estimated model parameters, which we express as hazard ratios (HRs). HRs give the expected change in the ratio of the odds of experiencing the "hazard" (migrating for the first time in adulthood) associated with a one-unit increase in the explanatory variables, ceteris paribus.

4. Empirical evidence

4.1 Kaplan–Meier survival functions for first adult migration

Figure 2 shows the results from the Kaplan–Meier survival functions. These signal a low risk of adult international migration for G3+ and a slightly greater risk for G2 and G2.5. In contrast, G1.5 and G2.75 – whose members all had childhood migration experiences – display substantially higher risks. For example, by age 30, the share of respondents who had migrated was 3.26% for G3+, 4.97% for G2, 8.03% for G1.5, and 13.33% for G2.75.

Figure 2: Kaplan–Meier survival estimates of the first international migration in adulthood by migrant generation as defined in Table 1



Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE for individuals born after 1945.

Appendix B compares the Kaplan–Meier survival functions for each migrant generation against one another and reports 95% confidence intervals. The results show that, except for G2.5, all migrant groups have higher odds of migrating in adulthood than G3+. This pattern of results is largely consistent with our theoretical expectations. Because members of G2.5 have only one parent born outside the survey country and did not experience migration themselves as children, their migration capital is very limited. The fact that members of G1.5 and G2.75 display the highest levels of mobility is also consistent with expectations, as they combine family migration histories and their own childhood migration experiences. Rates may be the highest for the G2.75 group because many respondents within this group migrated twice in childhood: they left the survey country and came back during childhood with their parents. It is nevertheless important to note that confidence intervals overlap for G1.5 and G2.75 (as shown in Appendix B).

4.2 Cox regression models of first adult migration

The results of the first set of multivariable Cox regression models are presented in Table 3. The model with no control variables (Model A) confirms the descriptive patterns identified in Figure 2: all migrant groups are more likely to migrate than G3+. With the addition of country, wave, and fixed effects in Model B, members of G2.5 are no longer more likely to migrate than members of G3+. This finding holds when sociodemographic characteristics are added in Model C. In contrast, members of G2 are more likely to migrate in adulthood (HR = 1.61) than members of G3+. This finding lends support to Hypothesis 1a, which posits that individuals with a greater family migration history are more likely to migrate during adulthood. In other words, while family migration history matters, it is the cumulative contribution of having two foreign-born parents that leads to heightened adult mobility. This explains why there was no association between membership in G2.5 and migration in adulthood in the Table 3 models. Results also point to the importance of lived migration experience during childhood, with members of G2.75 (HR = 2.74) and G1.5 (HR = 2.13) reporting higher hazard ratios than members of G2 (HR = 1.61). However, some confidence intervals overlap, which calls for some caution in interpreting these results.

For some subgroups, however, the distinction between family migration history and own lived migration experiences may not be straightforward. This applies to individuals who moved very early in childhood and who, as a result, may have limited memories of their premigration lives or their early migration experiences. To explore this, we run additional models replacing the migration generation variable with the age at which respondents arrived in the survey country. Of note, this includes individuals who left during childhood and returned (G2.75), with the return being their last childhood

migration. The new explanatory variable distinguishes respondents born in the country from those arriving at 1 to 3 years of age, 4 to 6 years, 7 to 9 years, 10 to 13 years, and 14 to 17 years. We also control for the number of parents born overseas (zero, one, or two). The results (Model D in Table 4) indicate that migration experiences after the age of 4 increase the likelihood of migrating in adulthood, with no clear differences between children who migrated early (e.g., age 4 to 6) and those who migrated later (e.g., after age 14). Collectively, the results confirm the importance of lived migration experiences during childhood, which compound with family migration history to enhance the odds of adult international migration, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2.

Table 3: Hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals from Cox proportional hazard models of first adult migration, main models

	Model A	Model B	Model C
Migration history (ref. cat. G3+)			
G2.75	3.88	3.72	2.74
	[2.71,5.56]	[2.59,5.33]	[1.90,3.95]
G1.5	2.52	2.18	2.13
	[1.74,3.66]	[1.49,3.18]	[1.46,3.12]
G2	1.63	1.63	1.61
	[1.02, 2.61]	[1.02,2.62]	[1.01,2.59]
G2.5	1.39	1.19	1.08
	[1.04,1.84]	[0.90,1.59]	[0.81,1.44]
Demographic characteristics			
Female			1.14
			[0.99,1.30]
Birth cohort (ref. cat. 1946–1952)			
1953–1959			0.81
			[0.68,0.95]
1960–1967			0.75
			[0.62,0.91]
Parental education (ref. cat. primary)			
Second			1.32
			[1.10,1.59]
Tertiary			2.43
			[2.00,2.96]
Residence at age 17 (ref. cat. big city)			
Suburb of a big city			0.64
			[0.50,0.82]
Large town			0.66
			[0.53,0.82]
Small town			0.74
			[0.61,0.91]
Rural area or village			0.48
			[0.40,0.59]
Country and wave fixed effects	No	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	19,475	19,475	19,475
Log likelihood	–8,357	–8,198	–8,107
Akaike information criteria (AIC)	16,753	16,584	15,460

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

We previously theorised that childhood migration is a byproduct of parental migration history, as shown in Figure 1. Thus the childhood migration variable may "absorb" some of the estimated effect of the family migration history variables. As a robustness check, we ran an additional model, Model E in Table 4, in which we excluded the childhood migration experience based on the year of arrival in the survey country and kept only the number of parents born overseas. The results confirm the importance of having two (compared to one or no) foreign-born parents. Further, the slight increase in HRs on the family history variables supports the notion that their impact on the odds of migration runs partially through childhood migration experiences.

While not focal to the arguments in this paper, we note that HRs on the control variables are generally consistent with theoretical expectations. Migration is well established to be a selective prospect, particularly with respect to education (Feliciano 2005). Consistent with this claim, the probability of migrating increases with parental education, as suggested by HRs of 1.50 for secondary education and 2.60 for tertiary education in Model D. We also note that the risk of migrating decreases with residence in more rural areas, but respondent's sex does not appear to matter.

4.3 The role of parental socioeconomic status

In the next analysis, we delve further into the role of education by replicating Model C across subsets of respondents defined by parental education. The results are presented in Table 5. Because of small sample sizes and ensuing large confidence intervals, these results should be interpreted carefully. Overall, two key findings emerge. First, all groups benefit from migration capital, including those whose parents had only primary education. This is most visible for members of G2.75 and G1.5, who are more likely to migrate than those in G3+ at all levels of parental education. This pattern of results reinforces the importance of migration capital as a factor influencing mobility over and above socioeconomic status and across diverse groups. Second, despite overlapping confidence intervals, some hazard ratios are larger for individuals with primary-educated parents compared to those with tertiary-educated parents. This is a surprising finding, as it suggests that respondents from less advantaged backgrounds benefit comparatively more from migration capital. However, overlapping confidence intervals for the same groups across models make it difficult to make categorical assertions about this. In any case, we find no evidence that migration capital requires a minimum level of socioeconomic capital to exert an influence on migration, which goes against the predictions formulated in Hypothesis 4. Rather, the results tentatively suggest the reverse: migration capital may compensate for a lack of socioeconomic capital.

Table 4: Hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals from Cox proportional hazard models of first adult migration, including age at last childhood migration as a control variable

	Model D	Model E
Parents' birthplace (ref. cat. both born in survey country)		
1 parent born outside survey country	1.04 [0.77,1.40]	1.08 [0.81,0.143]
2 parents born outside survey country	1.18 [0.79, 1.77]	1.81 [1.34,2.46]
Age at last childhood migration (ref. cat. born in survey country and stayed there)		
1 to 3 years	1.39 [0.61, 3.20]	-
4 to 6 years	2.18 [1.16,4.08]	-
7 to 9 years	2.03 [1.00,4.14]	-
10 to 13 years	2.38 [1.32,4.29]	-
14 to 17 years	2.07 [1.14,3.58]	-
Demographic characteristics		
Female	1.06 [0.92,1.22]	1.15 [1.00,1.31]
Birth cohort (ref. cat. 1946–1952)		
1953–1959	0.79 [0.67,0.64]	0.81 [0.70,0.95]
1960–1967	0.76 [0.63,0.92]	0.71 [0.59,0.85]
Parental education (ref. cat. primary)		
Secondary	1.50 [1.23, 1.81]	1.35 [1.12,1.62]
Tertiary	2.60 [2.11,3.20]	2.53 [2.08,3.08]
Residence at age 17 (ref. cat. big city)		
Suburb of a big city	0.71 [0.54,0.97]	0.64 [0.50,0.82]
Large town	0.77 [0.67,0.97]	0.66 [0.53,0.82]
Small town	0.83 [0.67,1.01]	0.74 [0.61,0.90]
Rural area or village	0.54 [0.44,0.66]	0.47 [0.39,0.85]
Country and wave fixed effects	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	19,475	19,475
Log likelihood	–8,128	–8,139

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

Table 5: Hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals from Cox proportional hazard models of first adult migration by parental education

	Primary-educated parents	Secondary-educated parents	Tertiary-educated parents
Migration history (ref. cat. G3+)			
G2.75	3.90	2.97	2.36
	[1.72,8.83]	[1.56,5.69]	[1.39,4.01]
G1.5	3.23	2.08	1.17
	[1.90,5.50]	[0.92,4.71]	[0.48,2.87]
G2	0.92	1.08	1.12
	[0.45,1.89]	[0.70,1.68]	[0.70,1.79]
G2.5	1.70	2.43	0.83
	[0.75,3.88]	[1.25,4.74]	[0.26,2.63]
Demographic characteristics			
Female	0.82	1.14	1.46
	[0.64,1.04]	[0.92,1.42]	[1.12,1.88]
Birth cohort (ref. cat. 1946–1952)			
1953–1959	0.62	0.86	1.02
	[0.47,0.82]	[0.67,1.10]	[0.75,1.39]
1960–1967	0.47	0.69	1.09
	[0.33,0.67]	[0.51,0.93]	[0.77,1.54]
Residence at age 17 (ref. cat. big city)			
Suburb of a big city	0.93	0.50	0.62
	[0.56,1.54]	[0.32,0.76]	[0.41,0.92]
Large town	0.79	0.70	0.53
	[0.52,1.19]	[0.50,0.98]	[0.36,0.79]
Small town	0.71	0.66	0.84
	[0.47,1.056]	[0.48,0.91]	[0.60,1.17]
Rural area or village	0.58	0.41	0.46
	[0.40,0.87]	[0.30,0.55]	[0.31,0.69]
Country and wave fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of observations	9,105	7,547	2,790
Log likelihood	–23,167	–2,919	–1,939

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

4.4 Onward versus return migration

We now turn our attention to migration destinations, as this enables us to tease out the relative role of general versus location-specific migration capital. To accomplish this, we consider two separate scenarios: (1) whether individuals migrate to countries where their parents were born or where these individuals resided during childhood (return migration) and (2) whether individuals migrate to third countries with which they have no such ties (onward migration). The cumulative proportion of individuals who engaged in return and onward migration by age 50 is reported in Table 6. This shows that members of G2.75 are nearly twice as likely to migrate onward (9.52%) than to engage in return migration (5.24%). For members of G1.5, however, rates of return migration (5.15%) and onward migration (4.82%) are closer. In contrast, members of G2 and G2.5 are more likely to

engage in onward migration (6.59% and 5.03%, respectively) than return migration (< 1%).

Table 6: Migration type by family migration history and childhood migration experience; cumulative proportion by age 50

	G3	G2.75	G1.5	G2	G2.5
Return migration	–	5.24	5.15	0.00	0.55
Onward migration	4.06	9.52	4.81	6.59	5.03

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

Results from multivariable Cox regression models in Table 7 compare the determinants of return and onward moves. These models exclude members of G3+, as they cannot engage in return migration. The results confirm that members of G2.75 are about 50% more likely to migrate onward than members of G1.5 and G2.5. On the other hand, those in G2.75 and G1.5 are equally likely to engage in return migration and do so to a greater extent than members of G2.5 and G2.0. This pattern of effects suggests that intergenerational transmission contributes to the formation of both location-specific and general capital, consistent with Hypothesis 3. Differences across migration generations suggest that lived migration experiences enable return migration to a greater extent than family migration history alone.

Exploring the role of parental education, a proxy for socioeconomic status, can aid in establishing which groups most benefit from migration capital accumulation. Parental education enables onward migration (HR = 2.20), but it does not seem to play such a significant role in return migration, as suggested by confidence intervals that cross over 1 in Table 7. From this prism, economic and migration capital may cumulatively benefit the most advantaged groups, consistent with Hypothesis 4. Unsurprisingly, this pattern is particularly pronounced for onward migration, which is a riskier and more costly endeavour than return migration. This result should be interpreted cautiously, however, because of the small sample size coupled with the lower incidence of return migration in our sample.

More generally, we note that members of G1.5, who also benefited from a lived migration experience, may face greater barriers to migrating in adulthood than those in G2.75 (whose parents were born in the survey country). Such barriers might include difficulties being granted residency visas in third countries, as some people might not be citizens of the European countries in which they reside. This proposition is supported by the fact that G1.5 members are particularly likely to engage in return migration but not onward migration. These findings also signal that living in a foreign country during childhood is essential to developing location-specific migration capital.

Table 7: Hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals from Cox proportional hazard models of first adult migration; models distinguishing onward and return migration

	Onward migration	Return migration
Migration history (ref. cat. G2.75)		
G1.5	0.50	1.08
	[0.38,1.03]	[0.41,2.83]
G2	0.76	0.00
	[0.39,2.30]	[0.00,0.00]
G2.5	0.45	0.10
	[0.26,0.80]	[0.03,0.33]
Demographic characteristics		
Female	1.51	0.88
	[0.84,1.79]	[0.42,1.86]
Birth cohort (ref. cat. 1946–52)		
1953–59	0.78	1.32
	[0.49,1.25]	[0.49,3.58]
1960–67	0.55	1.45
	[0.32,0.96]	[0.47,4.49]
Parental education (ref. cat. primary)		
Second	1.49	1.51
	[0.95,2.70]	[0.54,4.19]
Tertiary	2.20	2.40
	[1.23,3.90]	[0.82,6.99]
Residence at age 17 (ref. cat. big city)		
Suburb of a big city	0.46	1.13
	[0.22,0.98]	[0.32,3.97]
Large town	0.27	1.74
	[0.12,0.59]	[0.63,4.80]
Small town	0.66	0.87
	[0.38,1.30]	[0.28,2.68]
Rural area or village	0.41	1.15
	[0.23,0.972]	[0.40,3.28]
Country and wave fixed effects	Yes	Yes
n	1,666	1,590
Log likelihood	–799	–196
Akaike information criteria (AIC)	1480	490

Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE. The analyses exclude G3+.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Building on a rapidly expanding literature on the intergenerational transmission of demographic behaviours, this study posits that the international migration of adult individuals is facilitated by the intergenerational transmission of migration capital. We tested this proposition by examining the migration of a cohort of European baby boomers born between 1946 and 1967. Our key results largely align with our research hypotheses, as summarised in Appendix C. Consistent with Hypotheses 1a and 1b, we found that

family migration history plays a decisive role in facilitating subsequent adult migration. However, parents seem to serve as a behavioural model only for individuals with two foreign-born parents, which increases the probability of adulthood migration by 20% to 80% (depending on the model) relative to those with no foreign-born parents. In contrast, having only one foreign-born parent does not seem to be a sufficient condition to elicit international migration in adult life. An ensuing question is whether it makes a difference if it is the father or the mother who was born outside the survey country. Gender socialisation theory suggests that parents specialise in the socialisation of their children, spending more time with and passing on their views and attitudes more strongly to children of their own gender (Perales et al. 2023). Parents may therefore be more likely to pass on their migration capital and attitudes to children of their own gender. This hypothesis has yet to be empirically validated, representing an important avenue for future research.

In our sample, for 91% of individuals with two foreign-born parents, both parents were born in the same country. So we conclude that such a family arrangement facilitates the transmission of location-specific migration capital. This is visible in the migration behaviour of members of the 1.5 generation, who exhibit a disproportionate likelihood to engage in return but not onward migration. This pattern of results mirrors that observed in recent research on migration intentions (Caron 2020). An opportunity remains to further explore the migration behaviour of children with migrant parents born in different countries. Based on our definition of migration capital, we might anticipate individuals with migrant parents born in the same country to receive greater doses of location-specific capital, whereas those with migrant parents from different countries may receive greater levels of general migration capital. Datasets with a greater number of respondents with parents born in different countries than SHARE are required to empirically test this proposition.

The fact that second-generation migrants are only marginally more likely to emigrate in adulthood than members of G3+ is not surprising given that their parents did not return to their origin countries and may have socialised their children into thinking that the host country is a desirable place. However, research on migration intentions suggests geographical variations in return intentions, with migrants from Western European countries exhibiting greater intentions than those from outside Europe (Caron 2020). Future work should endeavour to extend this body of work from migration intentions to migration behaviour.

Early neoclassical studies often depicted return migration as "failed migration" caused by a lack of social or economic integration linked to low human capital (Harris and Todaro 1970). This perspective is supported by reactive transnationalism theory, which emphasises the role of negative subjective experiences in eliciting migration intentions (Snel, Hart, and Van Bochove 2016). Yet some studies have found no

association between integration and return intentions (De Haas and Fokkema 2011). The idea of a negative association between socioeconomic integration and return migration has also been questioned by the new economics of labour migration theory, which views return migration as a desired outcome that is part of a planned intergenerational strategy to diversify risk (Stark and Stark 1991). Given this theoretical shift, the heterogeneity of motivations for return migration is now widely acknowledged (Constant and Massey 2002). By considering, for the first time, individuals born in the survey country to parents born in the survey country with a lived childhood migration experience (G2.75), we have confirmed that return migration does not necessarily signal unsuccessful moves or a response to experiences of discrimination. Rather our results support a view of return migration as a deliberate strategy facilitated by the acquisition of migration capital.

Our findings also indicate that lived childhood migration experiences play a critical role in setting individuals on a migratory path. Individuals who migrate in childhood exhibit twice the risk of migrating internationally in adulthood compared to those with no such experience (Model D). This pattern also manifests in the heightened adult mobility of (1) G1.5 compared with G2 and (2) G2.75 compared with G3+. These findings align with experiential learning theory, a perspective that emphasises the role of concrete experiences in supporting abstract conceptualisation and the formation of knowledge. In the context of this study, these concrete experiences may include practical knowledge of how to migrate and an understanding of the benefits of migration, particularly when migration occurs after the age of 4. We interpret this finding as older children being more aware of their surroundings and thus being better positioned to draw on their early migration experiences as adults. Bearing some limitations that pertain to small cell sizes, our results lend preliminary support to Hypothesis 2: while family migration history matters for those with no hands-on migration experience, a lived experience of migration coupled with family migration history is more conducive to subsequent international migration, including both onward and return migration. In other words, living in a foreign country during childhood helps individuals develop both general and location-specific migration capital, which also supports Hypothesis 3. The existing literature has largely portrayed childhood migration negatively, emphasising the loss of social networks. By taking a life course approach and following individuals up to age 50, we have shown that – despite any such short-term challenges – childhood migration experiences can be a source of advantage in later life.

An exploratory analysis of parental education further indicates that migration capital does not require a minimum level of socioeconomic capital – approximated here by parental education – to exert an influence on adult migration. Rather our results offer tentative evidence that migration capital may in fact compensate for a lack of economic capital – as denoted by greater influences amongst individuals with lowly compared to highly educated parents. Thus we find no indication that migration capital inherited from parents contributes to the reproduction of socioeconomic inequalities by affording adults

the opportunity to capitalise on it (Murphy-Lejeune 2002). However, given large and often overlapping confidence intervals in these analyses, these findings remain tentative and should be taken cautiously. Stronger evidence based on larger datasets is required to contradict scholarship suggesting that migration contributes to the transmission of socioeconomic inequalities between generations (Bernard 2023; Impicciatore and Panichella 2019; Panichella and Cantalini 2023). There is also an opportunity to advance this line of inquiry by drawing on more comprehensive measures of socioeconomic disadvantage than parental education, which we could not accomplish with the data at hand.

It is nevertheless important to acknowledge that migration is not always beneficial or an individual's preferred option. Indeed, most people aspire to stay in their places of residence (Debray, Ruyssen, and Schewel 2023). Little is known about the role of lived experiences of migration and family migration history in shaping individuals' aspirations to stay and their realisations of this, although recent evidence suggests that parents' experiences of forced immobility increase the mobility intentions of the next generation (Brunarska and Ivlevs 2022). Thus coupling our theoretical framework of migration capital with the aspiration capability theory (Carling 2002) may provide an effective framework for future research and would contribute to addressing the "mobility bias" that has been argued to permeate current migration research (Schewel 2020).

In reflecting on the implications of our findings, it is important to also acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, our results may be specific to the circumstances of European baby boomers, who constitute our analytic sample. These individuals reached young adulthood before the introduction of freedom-of-movement legislation within the Schengen area at a time when international migration was less common than it is now. Similar research focused on more recent European birth cohorts (de Jong and de Valk 2023) suggests that having one parent may be sufficient to stimulate migration in young adulthood. This discrepancy highlights the need to extend evidence to more recent birth cohorts and to different institutional contexts. In relation to this, we interpret the lack of onward migration among members of the 1.5 generation as an indication of the additional barriers they may face compared with native-born individuals, including access to residency visas in third countries, particularly for noncitizens. This proposed explanation aligns with Bourdieusian interpretations of migration capital (Kim 2018; Moret 2020), which emphasise the role of institutions and regulation in the production, conversion, and legitimisation of migration capital. Testing this proposition could be the focus of subsequent research that compares these processes across different origin countries, an approach that could not be followed here because of small cell sizes in SHARE and because most immigrants in our sample are from Northern and Western Europe.

As hinted above, the small size inherent to survey data on international migration constitutes a significant study limitation. While most of our results align with theoretical

expectations, small cell sizes led to some confidence intervals for HRs crossing the neutral value of 1 (Type II estimation errors). In addition, because evidence was mainly drawn from older cohorts of migrants from Northern and Western Europe, our results may not generalise to other cohorts. They are to be taken as providing an initial assessment of the concept of migration capital. Nevertheless, the present study offers a solid theoretical foundation for future research on the intergenerational transmission of migration behaviour and calls for further testing of our hypotheses using larger datasets for migrants from more recent birth cohorts, different origin countries, and different institutional contexts.

While the risk of migration can be easily captured in administrative data and population registers (which dwarf survey datasets), such data sources do not capture the direction of migration and do not enable distinctions between onward and return migration. Recent examples of linked administrative datasets between Sweden and Finland (Weber and Saarela 2019) offer a possible way forward, although extending this approach to multiple countries would be a major challenge. A more feasible solution would be the inclusion of retrospective life history modules, such as that done in SHARE, in established longitudinal household surveys, such as the UK Household Longitudinal Study or the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey. Such modules would provide evidence for more recent birth cohorts across a wider range of countries to better explain the formation and transmission of migration capital and its role in the reproduction of socioeconomic inequalities.

These data would also provide invaluable insights into the functional linkages between internal and international migration and their respective roles in shaping subsequent migration behaviour. Recent evidence indicates that lived internal migration experiences in childhood promote international migration in adulthood and, conversely, that lived international migration experiences in childhood facilitate internal migration in adulthood (Bernard and Perales 2021). This finding supports repeated calls to integrate these two fields of study (King and Skeldon 2010) while signalling the need to broaden the notion of migration capital to encompass both forms of population movement and the need to advance our understanding of how internal and international migration are sequenced over the life course (Bernard and Vidal 2023; Zufferey, Steiner, and Ruedin 2020). In the meantime, the present study offers a set of conceptual and analytic tools that we hope contribute to invigorating research on factors underpinning the intergenerational transmission of migration.

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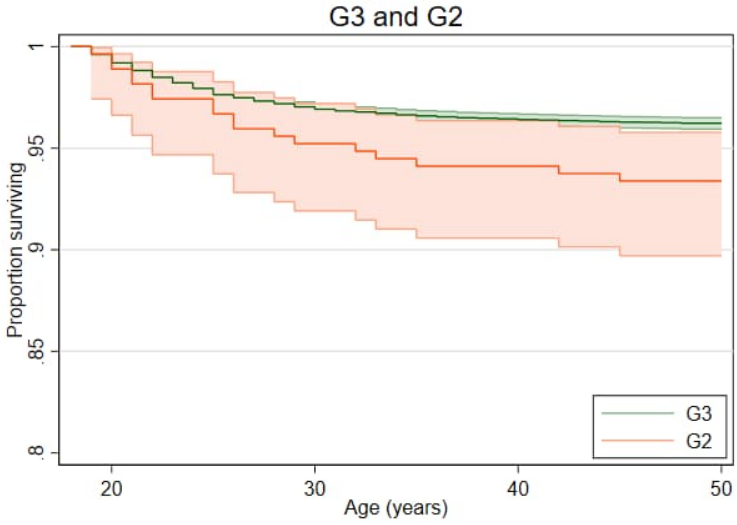
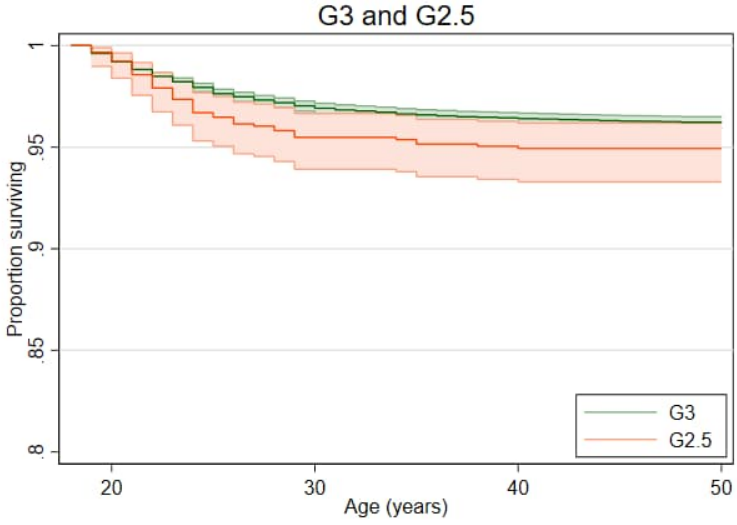
Appendix A: Descriptive statistics

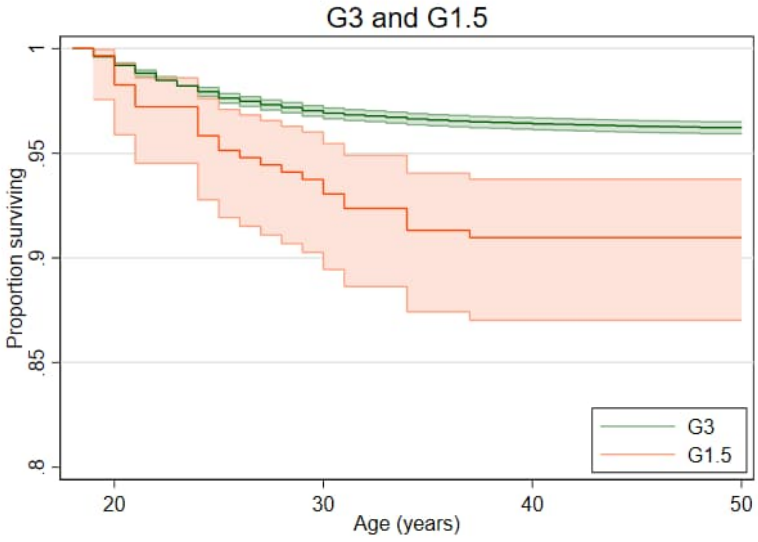
	n (unweighted)	% (weighted)
Migration background		
G3+	1,770	91.95
G2.75	210	1.26
G1.5	291	1.33
G2	273	1.44
G2.5	914	4.32
Number of parents born outside the survey country		
0	17,948	92.82
1	918	4.37
2	569	2.81
Age at last childhood migration		
Born in the survey country and stayed there	18,920	97.31
0 to 3 years	84	0.43
4 to 6 years	94	0.38
7 to 9 years	76	0.49
10 to 13 years	112	0.55
14 to 17 years	149	0.80
Migration from 18 to 50 years of age		
Did not migrate	18,606	96.75
Onward migration	818	3.02
Return migration	36	0.37
Sociodemographic characteristics		
Female	10,764	51.40
Birth cohort 1946–1952	6,194	26.35
1953–1959	7,049	34.87
1960–1967	6,217	38.87
Parental education		
Primary	9,007	48.61
Second	7,576	38.65
Tertiary	2,807	12.74
Residence at age 17		
Big city	3,201	16.14
Suburb of a big city	1,729	7.00
Large town	3,275	17.39
Small town	4,359	23.69
Rural area or village	6,896	32.79
Survey country		
Austria	1,444	2.57
Belgium	2,693	3.59
Cyprus	137	0.03
Denmark	2,056	2.05
Finland	372	0.4
France	1,739	20.18
Germany	2,102	26.16
Greece	584	2.29
Italy	2,468	21.75
Luxembourg	579	0.09
Malta	275	0.04
Netherlands	632	1.78
Spain	2,064	13.78
Sweden	1,320	2.92
Switzerland	1,069	2.38
Wave		
Wave 3	5,135	29.94
Wave 7	14,393	70.06

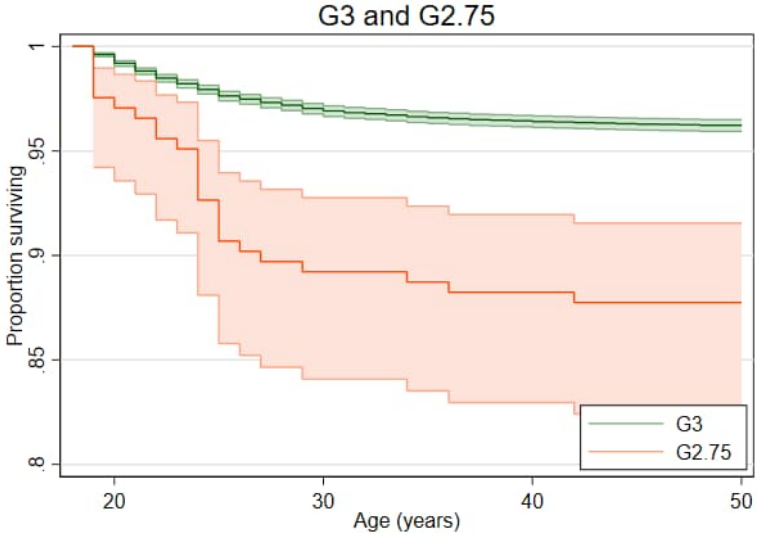
Notes: Data from waves 3 and 7 of SHARE.

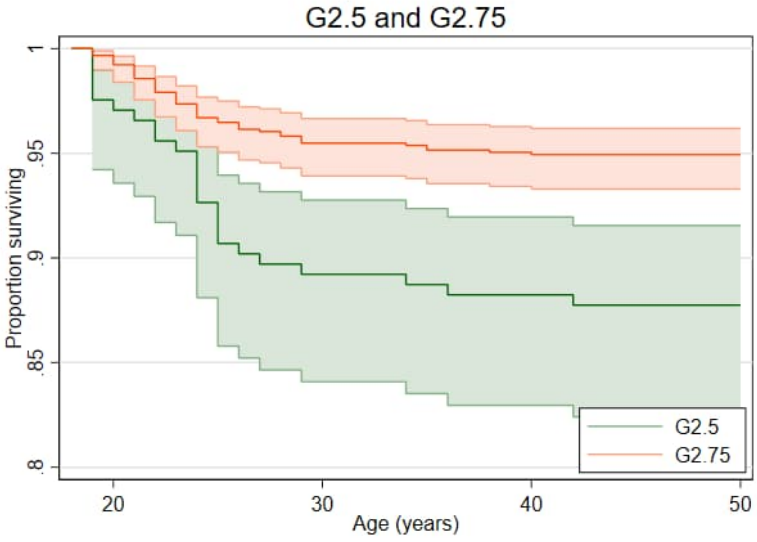
Appendix B: Kaplan–Meier survival estimates of the first international migration in adulthood comparing each migrant group as defined in Table 1, with 95% confidence intervals

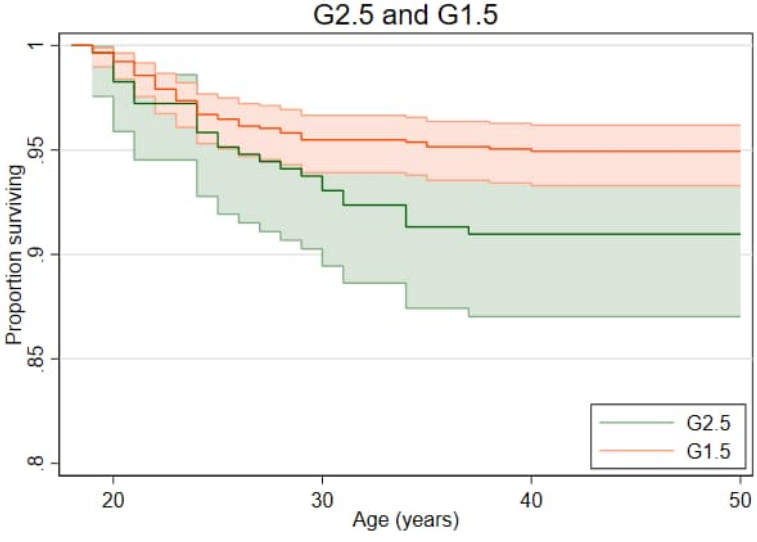


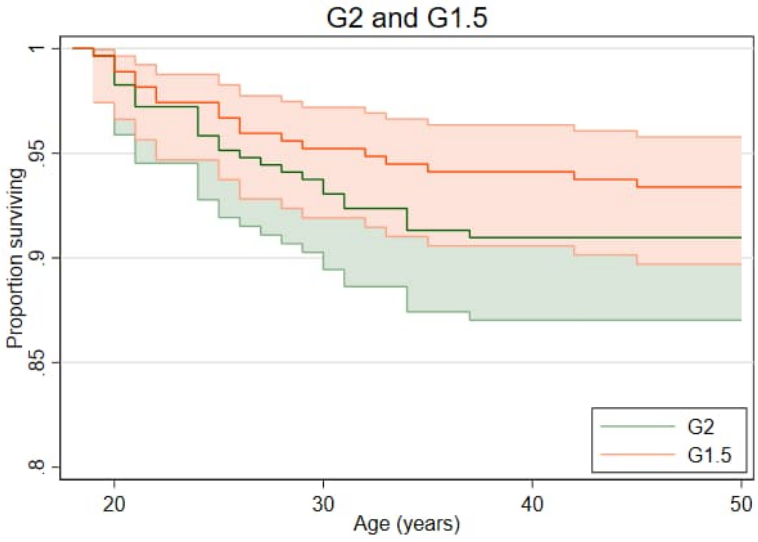


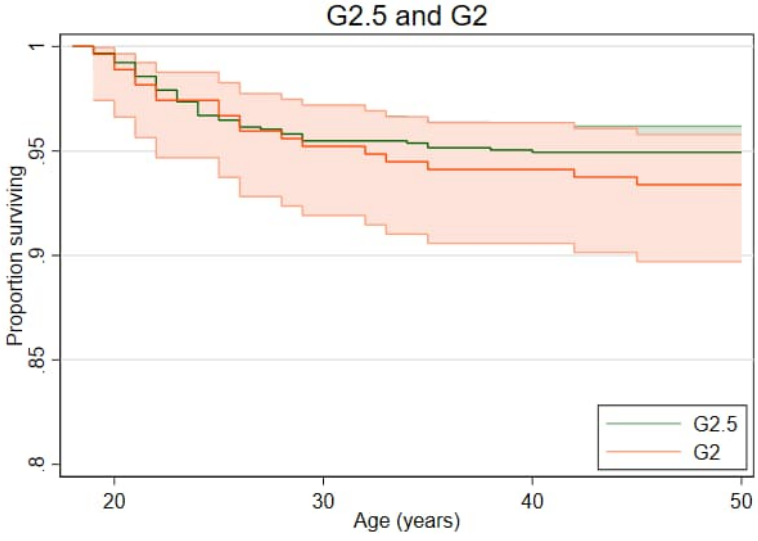

G3 and G1.5
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G3
G1.5

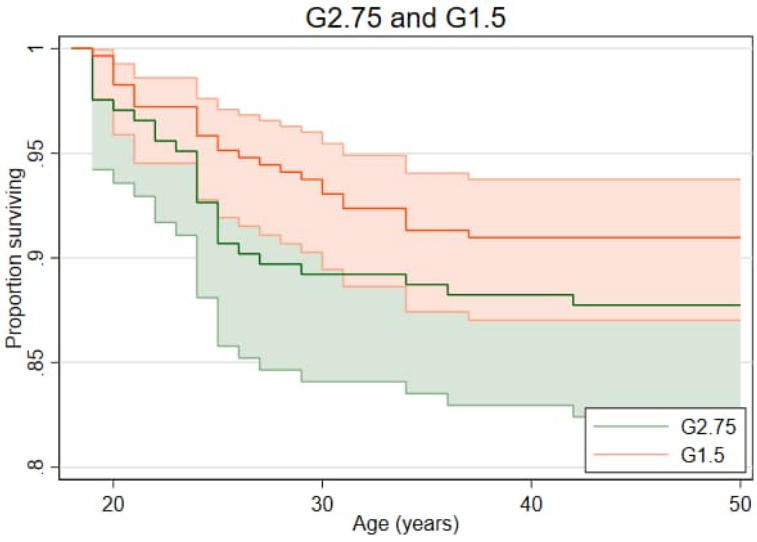

G3 and G2.75
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G3
G2.75

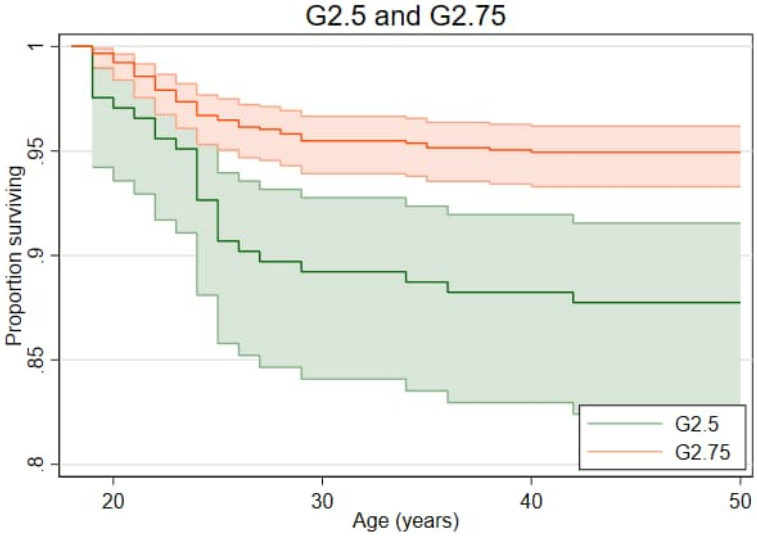

G2.5 and G2.75
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G2.5
G2.75


G2.5 and G1.5
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G2.5
G1.5


G2 and G1.5
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G2
G1.5


G2.5 and G2
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G2.5
G2


G2.75 and G1.5
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G2.75
G1.5


G2.5 and G2.75
Proportion surviving
1
.95
.9
.85
.8
20
30
40
50
Age (years)
G2.5
G2.75

Appendix C: Research hypotheses and summary of findings

Hypothesis	Support	Finding
H1a. Individuals with a family migration history are more likely to migrate than individuals without one.	Yes	Members of G2 are more likely to migrate in adulthood than members of G3+ (Figure 1), and this relationship holds once control variables are introduced (Table 3).
H1b. The impact of family migration history increases with the number of foreign-born parents.	Yes	Members of G2.5 (with only one parent born outside the survey country) are not more likely to migrate in adulthood than members of G3+ (Table 3). While family migration history matters, it is the cumulative contribution of having two foreign-born parents that leads to heightened adult mobility.
H2. Family migration history and lived experience synergise to cumulatively enhance the likelihood of adult migration.	Yes	Members of G1.5 and G2.75 (who combine both family migration history and lived migration experience) exhibit a greater propensity to migrate than members of G3+ (Figure 1 and Table 3). Lived migration experiences after age 4 matter.
H3. Individuals with high levels of location-specific capital are more likely to engage in return migration, whereas individuals possessing general migration capital are likely to migrate onward to a country where they or their family members have never resided before.	Yes	Members of G2.75 (born to parents born in the survey country but with a childhood migration experience) are more likely to migrate onward than members of G3+ and more likely to return to a previous country of residence than members of G2 and G2.5 (Table 7). Thus living in a foreign country during childhood helps develop both general and location-specific migration capital. However, members of G1.5 engage in return migration but not in onward migration, suggesting the transmission of location-specific capital.
H4. Socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals are less able to draw on their migration capital to migrate, particularly for migration to third countries for which migration costs are greater.	Mixed	Parental education – a proxy of socioeconomic advantage – is associated with increased adult migration for all groups (Table 5) but is a determinant of onward migration more than return migration (Table 7). Migration capital does not require a minimum level of socioeconomic capital to influence adult migration. Rather, tentative evidence suggests that it may compensate for a lack of economic capital, particularly for G1.5 and G2.75 (Table 5).